

public disclosure if the hearing officer determines that disclosure would be in violation of the Privacy Act, would reveal trade secrets or privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, or is otherwise prohibited by law.

§ 16.227 Standard of proof.

The hearing officer shall issue an initial decision or shall rule in a party's favor only if the decision or ruling is supported by, and in accordance with, reliable, probative, and substantial evidence contained in the record and is in accordance with law.

§ 16.229 Burden of proof.

(a) The burden of proof of noncompliance with an Act or any regulation, order, agreement or document of conveyance issued under the authority of an Act is on the agency.

(b) Except as otherwise provided by statute or rule, the proponent of a motion, request, or order has the burden of proof.

(c) A party who has asserted an affirmative defense has the burden of proving the affirmative defense.

§ 16.231 Offer of proof.

A party whose evidence has been excluded by a ruling of the hearing officer may offer the evidence on the record when filing an appeal.

§ 16.233 Record.

(a) *Exclusive record.* The transcript of all testimony in the hearing, all exhibits received into evidence, all motions, applications requests and rulings, and all documents included in the hearing record shall constitute the exclusive record for decision in the proceedings and the basis for the issuance of any orders.

(b) *Examination and copy of record.* Any interested person may examine the record at the Part 16 Airport Proceedings Docket, AGC-600, Federal Aviation Administration, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591. Any person may have a copy of the record after payment of reasonable costs for search and reproduction of the record.

§ 16.235 Argument before the hearing officer.

(a) *Argument during the hearing.* During the hearing, the hearing officer shall give the parties reasonable opportunity to present oral argument on the record supporting or opposing motions, objections, and rulings if the parties request an opportunity for argument. The hearing officer may direct written argument during the hearing if the hearing officer finds that submission of written arguments would not delay the hearing.

(b) *Posthearing briefs.* The hearing officer may request or permit the parties to submit posthearing briefs. The hearing officer may provide for the filing of simultaneous reply briefs as well, if such filing will not unduly delay the issuance of the hearing officer's initial decision. Posthearing briefs shall include proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law; exceptions to rulings of the hearing officer; references to the record in support of the findings of fact; and supporting arguments for the proposed findings, proposed conclusions, and exceptions.

§ 16.237 Waiver of procedures.

(a) The hearing officer shall waive such procedural steps as all parties to the hearing agree to waive before issuance of an initial decision.

(b) Consent to a waiver of any procedural step bars the raising of this issue on appeal.

(c) The parties may not by consent waive the obligation of the hearing officer to enter an initial decision on the record.

Subpart G—Initial Decisions, Orders and Appeals

§ 16.241 Initial decisions, order, and appeals.

(a) The hearing officer shall issue an initial decision based on the record developed during the proceeding and shall send the initial decision to the parties not later than 110 days after the Director's determination unless otherwise provided in the hearing order.

(b) Each party adversely affected by the hearing officer's initial decision may file an appeal with the Associate

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Administrator within 15 days of the date the initial decision is issued. Each party may file a reply to an appeal within 10 days after it is served on the party. Filing and service of appeals and replies shall be by personal delivery.

(c) If an appeal is filed, the Associate Administrator reviews the entire record and issues a final agency decision and order within 30 days of the due date of the reply. If no appeal is filed, the Associate Administrator may take review of the case on his or her own motion. If the Associate Administrator finds that the respondent is not in compliance with any Act or any regulation, agreement, or document of conveyance issued or made under such Act, the final agency order includes a statement of corrective action, if appropriate, and identifies sanctions for continued noncompliance.

(d) If no appeal is filed, and the Associate Administrator does not take review of the initial decision on the Associate Administrator's own motion, the initial decision shall take effect as the final agency decision and order on the sixteenth day after the actual date the initial decision is issued.

(e) The failure to file an appeal is deemed a waiver of any rights to seek judicial review of an initial decision that becomes a final agency decision by operation of paragraph (d) of this section.

(f) If the Associate Administrator takes review on the Associate Administrator's own motion, the Associate Administrator issues a notice of review by the sixteenth day after the actual date the initial decision is issued.

(1) The notice sets forth the specific findings of fact and conclusions of law in the initial decision that are subject to review by the Associate Administrator.

(2) Parties may file one brief on review to the Associate Administrator or rely on their posthearing briefs to the hearing officer. Briefs on review shall be filed not later than 10 days after service of the notice of review. Filing and service of briefs on review shall be by personal delivery.

(3) The Associate Administrator issues a final agency decision and order within 30 days of the due date of the briefs on review. If the Associate Ad-

ministrator finds that the respondent is not in compliance with any Act or any regulation, agreement or document of conveyance issued under such Act, the final agency order includes a statement of corrective action, if appropriate, and identifies sanctions for continued noncompliance.

§ 16.243 Consent orders.

(a) The agency attorney and the respondents may agree at any time before the issuance of a final decision and order to dispose of the case by issuance of a consent order. Good faith efforts to resolve a complaint through issuance of a consent order may continue throughout the administrative process. Except as provided in § 16.209, such efforts may not serve as the basis for extensions of the times set forth in this part.

(b) A proposal for a consent order, specified in paragraph (a) of this section, shall include:

(1) A proposed consent order;

(2) An admission of all jurisdictional facts;

(3) An express waiver of the right to further procedural steps and of all rights of judicial review; and

(4) The hearing order, if issued, and an acknowledgment that the hearing order may be used to construe the terms of the consent order.

(c) If the issuance of a consent order has been agreed upon by all parties to the hearing, the proposed consent order shall be filed with the hearing officer, along with a draft order adopting the consent decree and dismissing the case, for the hearing officer's adoption.

(d) The deadline for the hearing officer's initial decision and the final agency decision is extended by the amount of days elapsed between the filing of the proposed consent order with the hearing officer and the issuance of the hearing officer's order continuing the hearing.

(e) If the agency attorney and sponsor agree to dispose of a case by issuance of a consent order before the FAA issues a hearing order, the proposal for a consent order is submitted jointly to the official authorized to issue a hearing order, together with a request to adopt the consent order and